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PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL THEORY

THE question which is suggested for examination in this paper is the relation of philosophical principles to political theories. Do systems of philosophy imply definite political beliefs? Is a thinker's philosophy of the state determined by his metaphysical position? In reason, and as a matter of fact, do theories of the state follow from philosophical premises? And, therefore, is it necessary to guard against certain types of speculation in order to further the cause of liberty and civilization?

These are not one but many questions, it may be said. Nevertheless, closer scrutiny will show that they are organically connected. And the problem which is central to them all has been suggested by the crisis of the war. Dazed by the military barbarism which threatened Europe, men sought at the outbreak of the war an explanation in this philosophy or that for the peculiarity of the Teutonic mind and its unrighteous doctrines. Nietzsche has been responsible for the war, many argued, as they discovered a resemblance between the gospel of the Will to Power and the spirit of the military party. Idealism has caused the war, others concluded, since definite elements of the German tradition can be traced back to Fichte and to Hegel. Or Darwinian naturalism has been the cause, in general by its furtherance of materialistic forms of culture, specifically through its formulation of the law of struggle as the principle of evolution.

For the purposes of this inquiry, it is not necessary to examine these assertions in detail, nor to argue the question whether any system of opinion can be held more than partially accountable for the origin of a conflict so manifestly grounded in political, racial and economic rivalries as these had developed amid an imperfect international organization. Philosophers by profession have assigned least weight, perhaps, to the asserted relation of Nietzscheanism to the war. For in spite of a certain affinity between it and the ruthless egoism of the Central Powers, the inner content of Nietzsche's teaching and the limits of his influence forbid the identification of the two. More important, and more germane to the present study, is the question concerning the influence of the remaining doctrines. Under

Idealism both fact and doctrine point to the work of Fichte. In 1807–1813 Fichte had gloriously withstood the tyranny of Napoleon. In 1913 the Germans gratefully recalled his patriotic service, praising in him the intellectual hero of the national uprising, when others, like Hegel, had held back or failed. During his later life and till the end, Fichte had been an impassioned leader of the people. In the *Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* he had traced out, as he conceived it, the culminating degeneracy of the times. In the *Reden an die deutsche Nation* he summoned the Germans to repair, as they alone could do, the calamity which endangered civilization. They formed the only possible saviors of European culture. On their efforts depended the hope of deliverance from the degradation of the age. "For if ye perish," so rang out the prophetic warning, "all humanity will perish with you."

Here we have the doctrine of the supremacy of Germanism at its intellectual source and in its primary philosophical form. Fichte is honored also as the intellectual forerunner of the unity of the German people. Hegel, on the other hand, failed to share in the revolt against the conqueror. But he made a significant contribution to the Teutonic tradition by his absolute doctrine of the state. Freedom, as Hegel taught, that is the independent and self-conscious life of reason, is realized essentially through political organization. The state is the objective realization of the rational process which constitutes the world. It is the indispensable vehicle, the bearer of the spiritual order. Thus it possesses substantial self-existence, as it possesses also supreme inherent worth. Such is Hegel's great contribution to the developing tradition—a doctrine, moreover, the influence of which can be followed in later German thought.

To Fichte and Hegel, therefore, principles go back which have helped to plunge the world into the miseries of the war. Teutonic culture the salvation of humanity, the state self-subsistent and supreme—these have proved fatal doctrines, and these received their classical expression from the leaders of the Idealistic school.¹ Idealism, it has therefore been concluded, must be held responsible for fundamental errors of political theory. And to avoid the evil in the future, recourse must be had to philosophical principles of an opposite sort. Especially in America, if we wish to develop our liberal democracy, we must ground our thinking in reflection which shall not be *a priori* and absolute, but concrete, experimental and free.

¹ It is, of course, not asserted that these principles are due to Fichte and Hegel alone, or to thought alone, especially thought in its philosophical form. Of the absolute theory of the state, in particular, it would be an unwarrantable extreme to assert either that its nineteenth-century development in Germany came from Hegel alone or that Hegel's teaching had no part in this development.

The case, no doubt, is considerably more involved than so brief a sketch would make it appear. Kant also contributed important elements to the spirit of the Germans, who accepted his ideal of duty, although in later years they have filled it with a military content which he abhorred. Again, and more pertinently, the Idealists of the present day urge a demurrer to the indictment of their doctrine which possesses inherent force. It was not in the time of Idealism's power, they remind us, that military barbarism developed, but precisely in the period of its decline. German imperialism grew up in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was the age of science, of naturalism, of industrialism, of just those forces which have led so much of recent thinking away from the Idealistic positions. Idealism teaches an absolutism of the spirit, not of economic control or political domination; its goal is the establishment of a spiritual kingdom, not the attainment of military power. The latter views are more consonant with the doctrines of its empirical and naturalistic rivals. To charge them on the Idealistic philosophy is to hold it responsible for evils which follow from the systems by which in the middle of the century it was unhappily supplanted.

The argument in defense thus carries undeniable weight, although it would hardly be possible to adjudge it a complete success. In either event, however, it is evident that here we come upon a case of connection between speculative reflection and political theories. Fichte's Idealism of selfhood became the basis of his ardent scheme for the renewal of the nation; Hegel's absolute Idealism issued in his absolute theory of the state. It is not difficult, moreover, to discover similar cases in other divisions of the history of opinion. From antiquity a comparison of the political views of Plato and Aristotle at once suggests itself. Both thinkers are Idealists, both inculcate ancient doctrines of the state. But as they differ in method and in metaphysical emphasis, so there is significant variation in their political positions. Plato advocates the absolutism of the *Republic*. Aristotle is a scientific as well as a speculative genius, he seeks to bring the doctrine of his master into touch with concrete phenomena; and so we gain the more sober, balanced, in some respects tentative teaching of the *Politics*.

In the modern world, again, the political philosophy of Great Britain is notable. In the seventeenth century appears the commanding figure of Locke. The "Father of English philosophy" is keen, shrewd, empirical, practical. He always favors sobriety of judgment and adherence to matters of fact. Moderation, sound common sense, toleration are his watchwords in all departments of thought. And so in the domain of politics. Locke is born in 1632

amid the confusion of the early struggle with the crown; he lives until 1704, two years after Anne succeeds William on the throne. Thus he becomes a witness of almost the whole of the conflict which issued in our modern England; or rather, he is more than an observer, for in much of the movement he takes a personal share. And through it all the author of the *Essay* continues the incarnation of the Whig spirit in its moderate form. As he avoids excessive speculation in metaphysics, so in politics he is ever for cautious views. The empiricism of his theory of knowledge finds its counterpart in his individualistic conception of the state. He repudiates alike the theology of the high-churchmen and the divine authority of kings. It is not to be assumed, indeed, that Locke's political philosophy is a mere corollary of his speculative endeavor: on the contrary, there is action and reaction here, and both theories bear the impress of the age and of its history. But he stands out as the representative philosopher of his party; while by his metaphysics even more than by his politics he lays the foundation for English liberal thought. And this liberal tradition has continued down to the present time. From Locke to Bentham, after Bentham in the Mills, with Spencer even after the great transition occasioned by the theory of evolution and in spite of the constructive tendency of Spencer's genius, last of all in Morley, who in 1914 left the cabinet of Asquith rather than subscribe the declaration of war—throughout the centuries the movement has run true to type, reproducing from time to time the characteristics which have marked it from the first.

Within limits, then, the thesis which asserts the connection of philosophy and politics may be said to be established. A relation does exist between metaphysical principles and theories of political organization. The fundamental divisions of philosophy are epistemology and metaphysics in the stricter meaning of the term. From these follow implications concerning the more derivative branches of reflective inquiry—concerning ethics, for example, or the philosophy of religion, or the philosophy of the state. This is true in the order of reason. It occurs also in the order of historical fact. Systems and schools and individual thinkers belong to classes and types. The spirit which is manifested in their study of the more general and deeper problems reappears when they consider the analysis of life in common, the question of political obligation, the rights of individuals, the nature of sovereignty, the forms of government, in sum the idea, the authority, the functions of the state.

It is important to note, however, the modifying clause attaching to this conclusion. Within limits the principle is just. What these limitations on its scope may be, is a question which requires examina-

tion. Many cases of political theory may at once be eliminated. For political thinking is often carried on in substantial independence, individuals and communities working out their doctrines apart from speculative considerations or with scanty reference to the philosophical point of view. Even when philosophy is present and operative, it is evident that other factors also may enter—and enter reasonably—into the formation of political opinion. Thus the connection between philosophy and political theory may be neither immediate nor exclusive. And the same conclusion holds of other disciplines of a like reflective type. In ethics and the philosophy of religion concepts arise which have their origin in the special department of thought concerned and derive their meaning from the characteristic problems with which it has to deal. Ethics, for example, raises the question of human freedom, whatever be the metaphysical position from which one starts; the philosophy of religion presses home the principle of values. So also in the field of political philosophy. Absolute metaphysics tends toward absolute politics, individualism toward liberal or radical views: but either movement may be crossed or hindered by tendencies sprung up in the course of reflection on the principles of politics themselves. Political thinking may thus be independent; it may react upon thought in metaphysics or epistemology: it may even supply the stimulus or the conditions from which in given cases speculation in these more central branches begins.

The probability of such developments is increased by the influence of personal experience and the relation of politics to the spirit of the age. Questions of political conviction often call forth deep emotion. In times of stress or change they occasion passionate excitement, even though actual revolution be avoided: so the individual is swept along by the current of his time, the while he regards the issue through the glasses of his own mentality. Once more the political philosopher will be no more apt than thinkers in other departments to speculate *in vacuo*, disregarding the conditions and the needs existing in his own environment. Or rather, it is to be expected that speculation on political matters will be sensitive as few other types of reflective thought to the movements of life and history. Especially in periods when new systems of political philosophy are born, these reflect at once the crises which have conditioned them and the individual thinkers to whose activity they directly owe their origin.

In many cases these two tendencies combine their influence. Not infrequently it is a matter of difficulty to distinguish between the effect of historical conditions and the elements of doctrine which follow from individual characteristics. Nevertheless the legitimacy of the two must be estimated by different standards. The personal is

of less importance than the general factor, and despite our willingness to-day to grant the former recognition, no one doubts that it requires stricter logical control. The influence of the conditions of the time is less subject to depreciation. And it enjoys a further advantage of peculiar significance: the historical conditions form a large part of the concrete data on which the political philosopher has to base his reflective results. It is impossible nowadays to believe that philosophy is to be spun out of the philosopher's own head; or, more technically, that the method of philosophy sanctions speculation without reference to definite bases in facts. And the data for political philosophy, or considerable portions of these data, are to be found in the phenomena of political life. The knowledge of what the state has been, and of what it is, underlies consideration of what it ought to be. The course of political history, the governments which men have wrought out, the experience of the given community, its ideals and its aims—these the political philosopher must consider on peril of disaster. The thinker who neglects them may be compared to the old philosophers of nature who built up their theories without stopping to inquire what the phenomena of nature had been ascertained to be.

The effect of these limitations of the influence of philosophy on politics has found abundant illustration. Plato's ideal state, it has been often said, is a Greek state idealized. Locke, as we have noted, was at once the protagonist of empiricism and a citizen of his age. The example of Spinoza and the relation of Spinoza to Hobbes are even more suggestive. Both philosophers adopt the social contract theory of political organization, Spinoza experiencing the influence of the English thinker. But their formulations of the doctrine show points of notable divergence. Hobbes is the complete absolutist: for him the compact through which the state is formed is irrevocable; the sovereign is to be a monarch, intangible so long as he maintains the order and security for which the body politic exists; so also he must be above the law and invested with complete authority, ecclesiastical as well as civil. Now *a priori* it would be reasonable to expect from Spinoza a similar interpretation of political principles. In his case, if in the case of any great philosopher, the implication of the metaphysical doctrine would be an absolute view of the state, provided the connection of philosophy and politics is an exclusive law. And yet, as all the world knows, this reasonable expectation was not fulfilled: the most thoroughgoing of modern absolutists in metaphysics abandons in large measure his abstract rationalism when he approaches the problems of the political order. To the sovereign he refuses to assign unlimited authority. In his conception of govern-

ment he favors the democratic or aristocratic rather than the monarchical analysis. Above all he is concerned to safeguard intellectual and religious liberty, to assure toleration, instead of centering his proposals about the creation of a powerful state. Logically, Spinoza's metaphysics should issue in autocracy: practically he advocates popular rule. Shall we err, then, if following the example of a recent writer, we explain the discrepancy by the extrinsic conditions of Spinoza's thinking? His family, taking refuge from persecution in the Netherlands, find there the largest measure of toleration which was attainable at the time in Europe. The government which grants them this security is an aristocratic republic, not a monarchical or absolute state. And the philosopher has his personal experience. He suffers persecution of a kind which his forebears had escaped, as he is expelled from the synagogue because of his free-thinking. He understands the people better than kings or princes, as (in part) he supports himself by the labor of his hands. Spinoza the *a priori* metaphysician is an abstract pantheist: it is at least suggestive that when Spinoza the grinder of optical lenses, the persecuted Jew, considers the question of government, he favors a liberal polity.

Or if we return to the problems of the war and consider again the influence of Fichte, it becomes in his case also impossible to ignore the effect of tendencies which include elements other than those that are merely speculative. Fichte was the prophet of Teutonic superiority, he prepared the way for the unification of the nation. But the age and the temperament conditioned his results as well as abstract reflection, entering like this into his political views and affecting their development. In the beginning of his career the philosopher had been a cosmopolitan, originally, indeed, an admirer of the French Revolution and its humanitarian ideals. It was not till after the campaign of Jena and the Prussian disaster that he became the ardent national leader. The basis and the content of the movement invoked to save the age continue idealistic. But the work is now allotted to the Germans as the elected nation, it is through their devoted labors that civilization is to be redeemed. The absolute Idealist of the earliest phase had favored internationalism. The patriotic Idealism of Fichte's last years, the years of influence in European affairs, is a complex function, thought and the pressure of the times blending into one.

The conclusion then is manifest. It is hardly too much to say that it completes itself. Philosophy and politics are evidently connected. But the principle of their relationship is not simple, but compounded of many elements. Epistemology and metaphysics may supply the premises from which a philosophy of the state is actually

deduced as in reason its conclusions are grounded in the more fundamental disciplines. On the other hand, it may grow up in independence of these, and at times react upon them. Or the personality of the philosopher, above all his political experience and that of the people to whom he owes allegiance, may affect the closeness of the connection in question, may give rise to cross-currents and counter-currents of opinion, in fine, may create tendencies which essentially modify the doctrinal result. And from this conclusion corollaries follow of a certain importance for the thinking of to-day. In view of the complexity of the problem, a degree of caution is indicated in appraising the responsibility of abstract thought for the present crisis of civilization, and *a fortiori* in arguing reflexly from the bearing of philosophy on the situation to the truth or falsity of this or that particular system. Such care will bring the philosophical investigator closer to a full realization of the varied elements in the case. It will enable philosophy at large to bear its part the better in the task of reconstruction which lies before the world.

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DR. STRONG'S PANPSYCHIC THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERCEPTION

IN his able and thorough survey of the problems of psychology and epistemology¹ Dr. Strong propounds a theory which challenges almost equally every current philosophical system of knowledge old or new; it is a bold attempt to construct a coherent epistemology on a purely panpsychic basis, and to show that "a psychic ego can come by evolution only out of a psychic world" (p. 322)—that what "appears to us as physical is in itself psychical" (p. 2). His panpsychism is of a very marked character. It is not that Mind or Reason is at the heart of things, but "Mind has been evolved out of mind-stuff" (p. 17); and mind-stuff again is feeling or sentience (p. 11). That the ego with all its complex activities has evolved will scarcely be questioned; but in what sense and to what degree its psychic character necessarily implies a world of the same nature is a difficult problem with reference to which I should like to consider Dr. Strong's main arguments.

1. His title, I venture to think, does not quite indicate the exact nature of the subject, which seems to me to be the origin of knowl-

¹ *The Origin of Consciousness*. (Macmillan), 1918. (In some cases my quotations are abridged, and the italics my own.)